

REMARKS

Claims 1, 5-7 and 9 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 5-7 and 9 are amended. The amendments introduce no new matter. Claims 2-4 and 8 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in those claims. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowability regarding claim 9. Claim 9 is indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. The amendment of claim 9 is taken in light of this indication of allowability. The remaining claims are also allowable, as discussed below.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 2/8, 4/8, 5/8 and 6/8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,114,772 to Araki; and rejects claims 3 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Araki in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,142,028 to Soh. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Without conceding the interpretation, or combination of the applied references, and solely to advance prosecution of the application, claim 1 is voluntarily amended to include features of now-canceled claims 2-4. The applied references do not teach, nor can they reasonably be considered to have suggested, such a combination of features. For example, claim 1 recites, among other features, a bearing member connected to the rotation-restricting ring for absorbing friction between the rotation-restricting ring and the member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear, wherein the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring and the bearing member are formed separately from one another, and the bearing member is first connected to the rotation-restricting ring, thereby forming a rotation-restricting unit, and then the rotation-restricting ring is fixedly connected to the pinion gear as shown, in exemplary fashion, in Fig. 7.

The Office Action asserts that Araki discloses wherein the ring is formed separately from the pinion gear. However, this does not correspond to the claimed feature, and Soh is not applied in a manner to overcome this shortfall in Araki. For example, merely including a roller bearing, as in Soh, with the thrust washer 32 of Araki would not render obvious this combination of features, based on, at least, the configuration of the allegedly corresponding flange 31 and thrust bearing 32 depicted in Fig. 8 of Araki.

For at least the above reasons, the applied references do not teach, nor can they reasonably be considered to have suggested, the combinations of features positively recited in independent claim 1. Additionally, claims 5-7 are also neither taught, nor would they have been suggested, by the applied references for at least the respective dependence of these claims, directly or indirectly, on an allowable base claim, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1 and 5-7 are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1 and 5-7, in addition to the previous indication of allowability regarding claim 9, are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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